



120 Thomas John (Tom) Thomson

OSA 1877 – 1917

Sketch for Lake in Algonquin Park

oil on canvas on board, inscribed on verso *To Jack Gardiner as a meagre token of a great esteem, Emmanuel College, Toronto, March 1937, Jim Lawson* and in Thoreau MacDonald's hand *Painted by Tom Thomson, 1912 or 13, Given to T.M. 1915, Thoreau MacDonald / T. MacDonald, 1913*
7 x 9 7/8 in, 17.8 x 25.1 cm

PROVENANCE

A gift from the Artist to Thoreau MacDonald, son of J.E.H. MacDonald, 1915
Reverend James S. Lawson, Toronto
Given as a gift from the above to Jack Gardiner, while he was attending Emmanuel College, Toronto, 1937
By descent through the family of Jack Gardiner, Edmonton

LITERATURE

Dennis Reid, "Photographs by Tom Thomson," *The National Gallery of Canada Bulletin*, no. 16, 1970, pages 2 – 5
Christopher Varley, *Lake in Algonquin Park: An Examination of an Early Painting by Tom Thomson*, Gallery Stratford, 1978, unpaginated
Joan Murray, *Tom Thomson Catalogue Raisonné*, the related canvas reproduced, <http://tomthomsoncatalogue.org/catalogue/entry.php?id=270>, accessed January 11, 2018

TOM THOMSON'S SHORT career as a painter is intimately linked to Algonquin Park. He first visited the park in 1912 and died there tragically in 1917, just short of his fortieth birthday. His most famous canvases and oil sketches interpret the park's varying landscapes from the late winter through the spring, summer, autumn and early winter.

In the spring of 1912, Thomson fished at Canoe Lake in Algonquin Park with Ben Jackson, a fellow employee of Grip Ltd. The following spring he exhibited his first painting, *Northern Lake*. It was described by his patron, Dr. James MacCallum, as a "picture [of] one of the small northern lakes swept by a north west wind; a squall just passing from the far shore, the water crisp, sparkingly blue & broken into short white-caps—a picture full of light, life and vigour." Its purchase by the Government of Ontario (the painting is now at the Art Gallery of Ontario) was a remarkable achievement for a largely unknown, novice artist.

Thomson traveled and painted in Algonquin Park from May to November 1913. On his return to Toronto he met the Montreal artist A.Y. Jackson, who later described the season's sketches: "The country in them seemed always to be viewed extensively. There were no gay little rapids or wood interiors or patterned rocks, but only the opposite shores of lakes, far hills or wide stretches of country." Thomson had abandoned the foreground framing devices of 1912, to focus on the water and distant shores in a number of related sketches that bear evidence of his increasing sensitivity to the varying lights and moods of Algonquin Park.

In *Sketch for Lake in Algonquin Park*, the choppy waters and rolling waves are vividly painted, setting off the rich blue highlight at the base of the central hill. The light brown and green foliage on the near shoreline contrasts with the black and light blue hills, crowned by the swirling blue, cream and off-white sky. In the more sombre painting *A Northern Lake* (McMichael Canadian Art Collection, catalogue #1972.5.7), the dark foreground water is crested with slow-moving whitecaps, the islands silhouetted against the blue hills and the more evenly brushed sky. *Lake, Shore and Sky* (National Gallery of Canada, catalogue #4565), given by Thomson to Jackson, and *Sketch for Morning Cloud* (Art Gallery of Ontario, catalogue #70/368) are both dominated by the angular clouds that cross the upper part of the composition, one grey and sombre, the other illuminated by the cool morning light.

With a new confidence, Thomson painted several canvases from the season's sketches during the winter of 1913 to 1914. *Moonlight* (National Gallery of Canada, catalogue #943) and *Morning Cloud* (Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, catalogue #PC-1051), both painted in broken impressionist strokes, were accepted by the Ontario Society of Artists that spring. Though publicly exhibited, neither canvas was signed by the artist, while a third signed canvas, *Lake in Algonquin Park*



TOM THOMSON

Lake in Algonquin Park

oil on canvas, 1913
28 1/4 x 40 1/4 in, 71.8 x 102.2 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 4727
Bequest of Dr. J.M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944

Not for sale with this lot

(National Gallery of Canada, catalogue #4727), was worked up from the sketch offered here. Although it is faithful to the original composition, the canvas lacks the vivacity of the sketch, its muted, overall green palette possibly due to early damage and its restoration in 1937. Blended rather than broken strokes depict the sky.

Study for Lake in Algonquin Park was acquired by the Reverend James S. Lawson, librarian at Emmanuel College at Victoria University in Toronto, from Thoreau MacDonald, who had received it as a gift from Thomson in 1915. In the 1930s Lawson acquired at least three Thomson canvases as well as oil sketches by Thomson, J.E.H. MacDonald and Lawren Harris with the intent of forming an art collection for the college, but his collection was dispersed in the 1940s. In 1942 he married the artist Edith Grace Coombs. This sketch was given by Lawson to Jack Gardiner, a fellow minister who later worked in Vancouver and Edmonton.

We thank Charles C. Hill, former curator of Canadian art from 1980 to 2014 at the National Gallery of Canada, author of *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* and co-coordinator of *Tom Thomson*, the 2002 – 2003 retrospective of the artist's work, which originated at the National Gallery of Canada and traveled across Canada, for contributing the above essay.

On verso is a remnant of a label from the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, NY. Lawson used similar letterhead when writing to Fred Haines, curator of the Art Gallery of Toronto, on May 12, 1931.

Please note: this recently rediscovered work is presently not listed in Joan Murray's catalogue raisonné of the artist's work as published online in 2009.

A letter of authenticity from Joan Murray accompanies this work, dated April 2018.

This work has been analyzed by the Canadian Conservation Institute, and their results support the attribution to Thomson.

ESTIMATE: \$125,000 – 175,000